



America's Arctic Paratroopers 1-501 GERONIMO

Fort Richardson, Alaska

NEWS

Contains Official Information
November, 2003

Message From the TF Commander

Dear Geronimo Families and Loved Ones,

As I write this note, the Geronimo Task Force is rapidly closing on our first thirty days in Afghanistan. We have already conducted numerous operations and will continue at a very fast pace. Your troopers have already conducted a major convoy from Bagram to Forward Operating Base (FOB) Salerno and many of the companies are involved in the protection of the FOB as well as moving throughout our area of operations to get an assessment of villages and the sentiment of the local nationals. Finally, we are also out trying to find Al Queda and Taliban forces that would do our country harm.



Your soldiers are working hard every day and I am sure many of them have already called home to talk or have written. Do not be alarmed if it is sporadic. We are in an extremely austere environment and our ability to communicate by phone or email is very limited. The mail is also limited to the amount of aircraft we receive and that flies out of the FOB. Currently, only about 60 percent of the scheduled flights to the FOB actually land. Much of this is due to the extremely high mountains that circle our base camp and the weather that they create. We are all making the best of it and continue to keep in touch with all means possible. Additionally, we continue to update the Geronimo Web Page with newsletters and pictures. Continue to stay active in your Family Readiness Group to ensure you have the most up to date information on our activities.

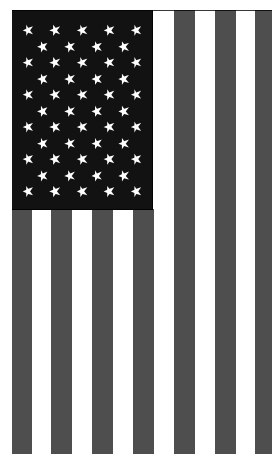


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Even though we are in a very austere location, we have worked hard to have a great Thanksgiving meal with turkey and all the trimmings. We will do our best to relax on this day, as the mission allows, and reflect on all we have to be thankful for. We all miss you but truly do appreciate the great support we have received from our families. This mission would be much tougher without that support. I am proud of each and every one of the troopers in this task force for the hard work and dedication they give to our country and I truly respect the sacrifice our families make while we are deployed to Afghanistan. It is an honor to have the privilege to command such fine men and women.

Thank you all. Happy Thanksgiving. Geronimo!

Harry C. Glenn, III
Lieutenant Colonel, Infantry
Commanding

Hatchet Company

Hello from scenic Afghanistan,

After several delays and being split up over five different aircraft, the troopers of HHC have finally arrived in Afghanistan. Most of the men flew on commercial aircraft from Elmendorf Air Force Base to Manas, Kyrgyzstan. (If you are like me, you will have to look that country up on a map)

For those of us who have been in the Army since before the collapse of the Soviet Union, it was very strange to be staying at an air base that was once a Soviet military airfield. There were even old Russian airplanes and helicopters all over the place. Who would have thought that one day our enemies would be our allies?

Most of the troopers only spent several hours at Manas before flying on C-130s into Afghanistan.



Chaplain Lee entertaining the men on the flight into Afghanistan

Once again, Hatchet company was split up. With approximately half of the company going to Bagram Airfield under the supervision of 1SG Collazos, and the remainder

going to FOB Salerno.

Salerno will be our home for the next nine months. I have the great honor to be the FOB Mayor during that time. That means I get to supervise a workforce of local Afghan nationals who help to make Salerno a place suitable for us to live in.

To give you an idea of how we are living, I will do my best to describe the FOB. Everyone here lives in tents. Each tent houses from 6 to 10 men. Cots are provided to sleep on and a gas fueled stove for heat.



Basic living conditions

This is what they look like when the men first arrive.

There are several ways for the troopers to improve their new "houses." There is plenty of wood on hand for the guys to use to build furniture such as shelves, benches, and desks. There are some very resourceful and talented men in Hatchet Company, let me tell you. Some of the men, such as SPC Kramer from the Scout Platoon, are so good, they have been "volunteered" to build things all over the FOB.

Another way the men are improving their standard of living is to purchase items from the local bazaar. We call it the Hadji Mart. It is located right outside the main gate and the men can go there and buy pillows, mattresses, and straw mats to make their tents a little more comfortable.



The Hadji Mart at FOB Salerno

Other amenities here at FOB Salerno are a new chapel and a new gym. Flush toilets and hot showers (I use those terms loosely, but I have seen worse). A laundry facility is on the FOB where local workers wash and partially dry the men's clothes. The cooks have a 5-star dining facility to rival any of New York's finest restaurants. And coming soon, we will have our own mini-PX which will be run by our very own Geronimos.

The men are doing great. All miss our loved ones, but we are all working hard to make this place a little more like home. The men love receiving the letters and packages from home. Thanks for the support.

HATCHET 6

Apache Company

After a few delays and a long flight, Apache Company finally made its way to FOB Salerno just in time to reap the financial benefits for the month of October. We found the camp to be not quite a desert oasis, but we've made it a home. We also quickly found out that it will be our home not for 6 months, but for at least 9. We weren't overjoyed at the news, but we're glad we found out now rather than in March. Either way, we are ready and willing to do our part to rid the world of terrorists.

When we arrived at FOB Salerno, we found that our predecessors had befriended large packs of dogs. They were everywhere. We also had steak for almost every meal. With each passing day, the number of dogs seemed to dwindle until they were all gone. The funny thing is, we haven't had steak in a week now. I'm sure it was just a coincidence. The food has actually been a pleasant surprise, with soda, Gatorade, and Otis Spunkmeyer muffins frequently on the menu. We even had Alaskan King Crab Legs for the super supper to welcome the last of the Task Force into the camp. Overall, the quality of life has been better than expected. We live in heated tents and usually have warm water for showers. Afghan workers do our laundry, which gives us time to stay focused on our mission.

On a more serious note, we conducted our first company mission that completed the movement of the entire Task Force into FOB Salerno. As part of the operation, we recovered some of our equipment that had been driven off the road. Although we didn't catch the culprits responsible, we got our stuff back and made our presence in the country felt.

With the arrival of the TRAILVON party and PFC Tim Cronin, we now have the entire company on the ground in Afghanistan. We would like to wish him and his wife Tanya congratulations on the birth of their baby girl on November 3rd. We would also like to wish everyone back home a Happy Thanksgiving and say thanks for all the mail and packages you've sent. The outstanding support from home helps us feel not quite so far away.

Geronimo was an Apache!



APACHE! AIRBORNE!
CPT Anthony R. Gibbs

Blackfoot Company

Blackfoot Company has performed its first Combat Operation in country and as always they were exceptionally successful. The operation consisted of moving over one hundred vehicles and about three hundred of our soldiers from Kabul to FOB Solerno by road, through bad guy country. Every soldier conducted themselves with the utmost of professionalism. I am proud to work with each and every one of the members of B Company.

Everyone in Blackfoot Company is adjusting and getting comfortable here in Forward Operating Base Solerno (FOB), except for 3rd Platoon. They are currently stationed near Kabul and are conducting a security mission to protect the people that train the Afghanistan National Army. They will rejoin the rest of the company at Solerno around the middle of December.

With the exception of 3rd Platoon, the battalion is altogether at Solerno and there are major improvements ongoing to improve the living conditions and preparing for future operations. The base has improved 100% since its last occupants have left. There are still only three phones and approximately nine hundred people trying to use them but, hopefully, we will improve on that situation also. The mail for Bravo Company was delayed for a while due to the fact that all mail was sent to the FOB while we were in Bagram preparing for our movement to Salerno. Once we arrived, everyone was overwhelmed by all of the packages and letters they received. We received 7000 pounds of mail for the task force. It was a great moral boost and felt like a reward. Please keep sending mail and care packages because it always makes us feel closer to home. Mail is taking about ten days to arrive.

As for Afghanistan and what it's like, the country is very rugged and mountainous, extremely dry and dusty and has very few trees. The temperature is in the 70's during the day and around 40's in the night. But we're noticing that the temperature is slowly dropping each day and we have had a few rain showers creating very muddy conditions. The sights to be seen off base are saddening. Along the roads, dirty kids with no shoes can be seen asking for water, food, or anything that you could give them. It breaks your heart to think anyone should have to live like that. That is why it is so important for us to be here, to stop the groups that are interfering with the building of the Afghanistan National government. It is also important that we never let our homeland get attacked as it did on 9/11. Your husbands are a huge deterrent on that front. Please keep us in your hearts as we are thinking of you all. Before you know it, we will all be home. In the span of a lifetime nine months is very short.

Please keep in touch with the FRG it's a great time to make new friends and keep each other safe.

CPT David M. Hale

P.S. I want to thank Kim Powell for sending the 1SG a NASCAR tape, he was getting on my nerves.

Newcomers:

Welcome SSG Colegrove our new Mortar Section Sergeant and his wife Tierra and sons Chase and Caleb.

Also want to welcome PV2 Hamilton to 1st PLT, and SGT Harned and his wife Nelda to 2nd PLT.

Promotions:

PFC Morris to SPC, PFC Sipple to SPC, PFC Young to SPC, PFC Whiting to SPC

Marriages and Births:

PFC Williams from 1st PLT had a baby boy-Duncan. SGT Harned had a baby before we deployed.

SSG Lynch from 2nd PLT married miss Andrea Lysyj.

SGT Medina also from 2nd PLT married miss Krystin Blair Napper

Reenlistment

Congratulations to CPL Wirth, SGT Bryers and SGT Hein for choosing to reenlist!

Departures:

SSG Lynch will be leaving in March for the Q-Course and SSG Shepard will be leaving the Army in about two weeks.

We wish them both the best and thanks for the sacrifices and hard work, you will be missed.



Comanche Company

Greetings from Forward Operating Base Salerno, Khowst Province, Afghanistan. Comanche Company has finally arrived and made this our new home. The trip from Fort Richardson took us through Germany, Turkey, and Kyrgyzstan, to our final destination, FOB Salerno.



1st PLT arriving on a C-130 29 OCT 03

Having traveled to the other side of the planet, and attempting to fill that travel time with as much sleep as possible, we arrived not knowing if the day was beginning or coming to an end. We had prepared ourselves mentally for the worst – sleeping on the ground and eating the MREs (Meals Ready to Eat) that we had carried in our ruck sacks. However, two companies of construction engineers and one company of infantry from the 10th Mountain Division had spent the last two months rebuilding the camp; to include tents with flooring and electricity, showers that occasionally have hot water, and latrines with porcelain thrones. We received our welcome brief and orientation in the new dining facility and enjoyed our first meal here in Afghanistan: Steak and Eggs, Gatorade and ice cream (breakfast).

Our focus the first few days was on receiving our equipment, confirming that our weapons were zeroed, making our tents our new homes and preparing for our first mission, providing security for the FOB.



The First Breakfast



3rd PLT at the range



PFC Cornwell, novice carpenter making shelves



Changing of the Guard



SPC Miller, 1st PLT Forward Observer calling Mortar Fires



2nd PLT C CO

Each platoon rotates every eight hours from a reaction force rotation to a guard rotation, then a rest rotation. Though this sounds hectic it leaves plenty of time for monkey business



1LT Sheats scolds the monkey

(Disclaimer – upon arrival at the FOB we were briefed that under no circumstances were cats, dogs, mice, birds, etc. to be kept as pets – little did I know that I would have to specifically add monkey to the list of unauthorized pets).



The monkey AKA “Dusty” has since been returned to his owner.

Despite the no pets rule, there is an abundance of cats and dogs that roam about the FOB. We do our best to keep them out of the living area, but they serve us well at the observation posts and gates as guard dogs.

Comanche Company Cont



South Gate "Watch Dog." I'm told very vigilant at night

With our feet on the ground, we have established our battle rhythm (daily routine) and the physical and mental health of the company appears to remain intact.



SGT Matthews and SGT Pajinag – all grins (and some teeth)

A Poem (courtesy of 3rd PLT):

*"SNAFU-ALPHA"
(Situation Normal, All Fouled Up)*

*Away from Alaska to Afghanistan we go,
We play in the sand, instead of the snow.
The flight was long, our bodies cramped to hell,
160 GERONIMOS, 1 bad smell.*

*In the desert and mountains is where we roam,
Then return to SALERNO, home, crap home.
The privates they work, all sweaty and smelly,
NCO's point their fingers, and fill their bellies.*

*3rd platoon works through the night, to protect ourselves,
CPT Brown waits till we sleep, to build his shelves,
LT Peterson has formed the master plan,
"Train instead of sleep," he thinks we're in VietNam.*

*SFC Adams, we beg you please,
Take the medication for your invisible lats disease.
The squad leaders work with Joe, as they pull guard,
SSG Rivera just mopes around, being Platoon Sergeant must be hard.*

*SSG Reed plays with his blowgun, all of the time,
SSG Childers benches 350, using only his jawline.
SSG Hipolito is the most high-speed Ranger I've met,
He's like a box of chocolate, you never know what personality you'll get.*

*PFC Verkennis likes to stutter,
PFC Salli likes to whine,
I'm sorry to report our first casualty,
SSG Clark's receding hairline.*

*SSG Sarten looks at us, like we're all a bunch of chumps,
SGT Matthews won't fix his gap, so he whistles when he jumps.
The showers are cold, the chow is inconsistent,
Before SSG White joined the Army, he was Monty Burns' assistant.*

*Then there's SPC Barber, who thinks he can cut hair,
SGT Herbert used to be Will's cousin, on Fresh Prince of Bel Air.
Now I must end this poem of mine,
But be assured; I'll mention your husband next time.
Please don't feel the need, to give me any credit.
A round of applause for CPT Condrey,
Who spent an hour to edit.*

PFC Brady Monroe Salli
M240B Gunner, "Volunteered" Poet Lauriat

The warm days and cold nights continue to pass with ease, but never without a thought of those back home. We are keeping our loved ones in our thoughts and prayers.

Geronimo,

CPT Jason W. Condrey

Delta Detachment

Greetings to the families and friends of the Delaware Detachment from Forward Operating Base (FOB) Salerno, Afghanistan. From all of us here to all of you there, Happy Thanksgiving. Things here have been hectic, to put it mildly. Over the past two weeks we have moved virtually the entire Task Force from Bagram to FOB Salerno. The Delaware Detachment played a major role in making the journey a successful mission. Three of the detachment's platoons were the armored/heavy weapons security for our ground assault convoy from Bagram to the FOB. 4th Platoon (CPT Marsh, Platoon Leader and SFC Walker, Platoon Sergeant) moved as part of the convoy's advance guard, successfully ensuring the route was cleared of enemy and obstacles. 3rd Platoon (SFC Dryer, Platoon Leader and SSG Constantine, Platoon Sergeant) along with 1SG Imler's truck and crew secured the 1st serial. 2nd Platoon (SFC Waite, Platoon Leader and SSG(P) Self, Platoon Sergeant) along with 2LT Espejo's truck and crew secured the 2nd serial. 1st Platoon (SFC Thomas, Platoon Leader and SSG Fuller, Platoon Sergeant), which had been at the FOB for about 2 ½ weeks, moved from the FOB to meet us about ¾ of the way, helped secure a recovery site. During the movement, we had to stop and recover some of our equip-

ment that had fallen prey to the enemy during its move to the FOB. Unfortunately, two of our TV's were destroyed. Thankfully, all of our troopers are closed on the FOB working hard to get settled and prepared for upcoming operations. Many of the men have become carpenters to build new floors for their tents, as well as shelves, tables, chairs, and night stands as we try to make our living areas "livable." Afghanistan is not nearly as cold as Fort Richardson, but it is still chilly. We all have pot bellied stoves to keep us warm at night, but we all would prefer to be home to enjoy the holidays with our loved ones. We have received many of the packages that have been sent and are very thankful for them. I know it makes everyone's day to get some mail, especially a package full of goodies from home. We are looking forward to some promotions fast approaching in December. Those who will get promoted are: 2LT Espejo to 1LT, SGT Bleckler to SSG, We all want to wish our loved ones at home a happy holiday season. Even though we cannot be there to enjoy it with you, we all have you in our thoughts and miss you very much. Keep us in your thoughts and prayers as we continue to fight this war on terrorism. Happy, happy holidays and God bless you all.

Echo Battery

Greetings from the Paratroopers of "Eagle" Battery, who are proudly serving our country as a large part in Operation Enduring Freedom! After flying across the world and arriving "in country" on different dates and locations, all Arctic Airborne Artillerymen are now 100% settled! The majority of the battery is currently located in the city of Khowst at Forward Operating Base Salerno, while others are performing mission essential tasks in Bagram, Kabul, and Chapman Army Airfield.

Pre-deployment preparation and the OEF deployment was a tremendous success! The hard work, dedication and selfless service of our extended "Eagle Family" once again greatly contributed to mission accomplishment. The paratroopers and families of this battery can proudly state that our unit is 100% prepared for any task or mission that will come our way. Our equipment is in top-notch condition, and the Paratroopers of this battery are extremely well trained! We are ready, able, and willing to make a difference in the war

on terror!

Mail is arriving!!! Without question, your Paratroopers morale sky rockets with every letter or "care package!" We have been receiving periodic news from the Alaska Post and Anchorage weather updates (sounds like we are missing some sub zero weather)...but there is nothing that compares to a letter from our loved one's. Please note that the last digit in our APO address has changed to APOAE 09354. Our mail route has changed from Kandahar (09355) to Bagram (09354), which will hopefully reduce mail delivery time. 1SG Levis continued to keep score on mail call....thus far SGT Bailey is in the lead, SPC Hudson and CPT Fogleman are tied for second, with SGT Bearsdley closing fast! I challenge all of our wives, children, friends and families to write their Paratrooper...1SG will ensure we are holding up our end of the bargain and returning your letters!

On Nov 16, the battery was re-designated to Battery B, 377th Parachute Field Artillery Regiment. The official cer-

emony will take place as soon as we receive our new guidon (snail mail)... be on the look out for pictures of this historic event! The Center of Military History decided that B/377th PFAR is better suited for our battery due to the distinguished and prestigious history of this Regiment. The long standing history of our battery supporting the Geronimo's of the 1st Battalion, 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment continues in Operation Enduring Freedom. The unparalleled achievements of the 377th PFAR, both past and present, clearly demonstrate our uniqueness, and ever deserving title as "The World's Only Arctic Airborne Field Artillery Battery!"

The chain of command is tremendously proud of the 110 paratroopers who are forward deployed in fighting the war on terror. The enemy doesn't stand a chance with supporting families, trained soldiers, and both Saint Barbara and Saint Michael (Patron Saints of Red Leg Paratroopers) watching over us!

Privileged to Command!

CPT Morgan

Forward Support Company

Greetings and salutations from Afghanistan. First and foremost I would like to say to all FSC family members and friends that we are all doing well and keeping busy. The last month has brought on many changes, changes dealing with climate, housing, work hours and culture. Though such changes at times have been drastic, the Task Force has continued to strive in efforts to make all here serving feel as close to home as possible. The meals are frequent and improving everyday, the shelter offers heat, and the mail has been reaching its destination. Life in Afghanistan has been interesting to say the least. We pushed forward and recently completed our first major combat movement, and were successful in moving all our equipment down to its current location. Those involved worked extremely hard, and we are proud of all those currently here serving our great nation. Such work ethics have led to successful missions and allowed for safety and wellbeing. Spirits and moral remain high, and daily meetings and chaplain services provide the strength, guidance and support that many seek in times of loneliness and need. I would like to emphasize that all those here in the FSC are healthy, happy and focused on the mission at hand. Hard work, dedication to job, and constant communication among soldiers throughout our days continues to allow for

mission success and high spirits. We all wish happiness and health to those back in beautiful Anchorage, Alaska and the much missed Fort Richardson. We have heard that the FRG committee meetings have been quite successful and that vital information pertaining to deployment extensions, current soldier welfare and general Task Force news has been reaching all those with a loved one currently deployed. Please know that family members and friends continue to guide us as we perform our daily duties. We have even been fortunate enough to receive some letters from Ursa Minor. The children's letters were a pleasant surprise, and we are extremely grateful to have the opportunity to add a few pen pals to our Task Force strength! Currently we are working on setting up a company internet connection, and in the near future plan to post some photos of "Wardog daily life" here in Afghanistan on the Geronimo Webpage. Thank you, one and all, for your constant support, dedication and daily prayers. The Wardogs will continue to work hard, stay safe, and even have a little fun along the way.

From Afghanistan with love,

FSC Wardogs



Chaplain's Corner

Hello and greetings to each of you from scenic Afghanistan. Okay, maybe it's not so scenic but it does have some subtle reminders of Alaska, like snow-covered mountains in the distance. And with the lack of ambient light the stars at night here are a spectacular reminder of God's creative handiwork. As for FOB Salerno, we continue to improve our standard of living far beyond what many of us expected. We are truly blessed.

By the time most of you read this Thanksgiving will be very near or past. And as most of you back home prepare for the holiday season, there is very little here to indicate that the holidays are near. It dawns on me however, that despite the fact that we will spend two of my favorite holidays—Thanksgiving and Christmas—apart from our families, there is a spirit among the Geronimo's that reaches beyond the distance that separates us from loved ones. There is an attitude shared by all at FOB Salerno that says, "We are honored and privileged to be here." Don't get me wrong, I long for the day to be reunited with my wife and children, but there is a great sense of honor that we all share in what we represent to the United States, to the Army, and to you, our families. In fact, as my family and I had our own holiday celebration before I left, I could not help but think how special this holiday season would be spending it with the soldiers that God has called me to love and care for at this time and place in history. I know that many of you will have family visiting during the holidays and some of you will visit family in the lower 48. Whatever the case, your holiday season should be a special time as you cherish the fact that your loved one, though thousands of miles away, is well-fed, clothed, and represents the freedom that you enjoy to celebrate the holiday season anyway you like. At FOB Salerno, SSG Seaman and myself will do all we can to make the holidays special for our fellow soldiers. We are already planning an interfaith Thanksgiving service, special Advent services, a Celebration of Carols service on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, and even a Christmas Folly show. Whatever your soldier's distinctive faith background, the 501st Unit Ministry Team stands ready to accommodate the religious needs of any soldier in our Task Force, so encourage him or her to explore and

grow in his or her faith during our deployment to Afghanistan.

Speaking of Thanksgiving, I must share what I consider to be a miracle in that our equipment survived not one, but two RPG's (Rocket Propelled Grenade) penetrating the container in which our equipment was stored as it was en route to FOB Salerno. It seems that the "bad guys" hijacked the truck, driven by a hired Afghani, and shot their RPG's at it. The miracle is that neither RPG exploded and though it made a mess and destroyed my Tuff Box, most of my personal and professional items were salvageable or unharmed. The biggest miracle, in my estimation, is that the electronic keyboard that we brought for use in the chapel was unharmed by the RPG that went through the wooden crate in which it was cased. As you can imagine, this incident made for quite a sermon topic. For those of you that are people of faith, Paul's words fit well when he writes, "All things work together for the good of those that love Him and are called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28). So be encouraged, God is bigger than the Taliban, RPG's, 3-month extensions, and anything else you may encounter during this deployment. And the best news is that He has a plan and a purpose for all of us! Until next time, we appreciate your prayers but know that we pray for you as well.

For God & Country,
Chaplain Brad Lee

